

The Grace of God Works

David Flatt

The apostle Paul had an unwavering love and commitment to the Gospel. He was fully persuaded that Jesus was the resurrected Lord. He traveled the world sharing God's good news with everyone who would listen. In addition to preaching the Gospel, Paul explained the practical meaning of this news.

Sometimes Paul would write about how the Gospel was to reshape individual character. Other times, he would use the principles of the Gospel to solve everyday problems. Paul's letter to Titus is a clear example of the Gospel being applied to daily life.

Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete to work among the churches. In the first chapter, Paul told Titus to appoint new elders in the churches. These elders would support Titus in combating false teachers who had infiltrated the churches. The remainder of the letter is designed to explain the practical implications of the Gospel, the grace of God.

In the second chapter, Paul shows how the grace of God forms a new household. In the third chapter, Paul explains how the grace of God reshapes citizens. We will focus on these chapters of Titus to demonstrate how the grace of God works to impact daily life.

New Households

The second chapter of Titus begins by identifying members of a common household in Greek culture. This home typically consisted of a married couple and their children, along with grandparents and domestic servants. Paul describes the attitudes and behaviors of each member of the Greek household: older men and women, younger men and women, and servants.

Older men and women were expected to be honorable and dignified in life and faith. They were to set a proper example of godliness for those who were younger. They were to give instructions regarding family life. Younger men and women were to similarly become honorable and dignified in their conduct. They were to be above reproach in the community. Servants were to be obedient and honest in their household duties (Titus 2:1-10).

But why were households to behave in the ways Paul described? The remainder of the chapter answers this question: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

Members of Greek households did not typically behave like this. Older and younger men were abusive and abrasive. They were known to be sexually promiscuous. Older and younger women suffered in this system. They became hardened and bitter. Servants grew resentful.

Paul is showing how the grace of God transforms the Greek household. Family life is greatly improved by the grace of God. Homes become safe, loving places. Godly families become beacons of light within their communities. They demonstrate how the Gospel offers a better life in the hope of eternal life.

New Citizens

The grace of God impacts us personally and within our families. Also, the grace of God affects our interactions with the world. As Christians, we do not have an isolated existence. We live within society and culture. In the third chapter of Titus, Paul reminds us of the proper conduct of Christians in the world: “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people” (Titus 3:1-2).

While our leaders may be ungodly in their personal and political lives, Christians must be obedient to the government. We are not to speak disrespectfully of anyone in our communities. Instead, we are to be kind and courteous. But why? Paul explained, “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7).

When we encounter ungodly people in our communities, we must remember that we were once ungodly. Yet, we changed. We received the grace of God by faith in the Gospel. Therefore, we are to seek to influence ungodly people in our communities. Paul insisted that Christians devote themselves to influencing their communities. The grace of God was profitable for everyone (Titus 3:8-10). Transforming citizens by the grace of God is how communities can be transformed.

Conclusion

Paul was convinced that the grace of God works. The grace of God had the power to deeply change people, families, and communities. The island of Crete was a test case for the grace of God. As ungodly as the culture was on this island, Paul had faith that the grace of God could flourish.

Paul’s letter to Titus helps guide us in various aspects of our lives. The letter also shows how we need to approach daily life. The grace of God is not just a blessing we received when we first believed and obeyed. Grace has applications in our family life and in everyday interactions in the community. We must be looking for how grace addresses various situations. The grace of God works! We must believe.